DEPLOYMENT AND IMPACT OF SUPPORT STAFF PROJECT

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Summary

The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project was designed to obtain reliable data on the deployment and characteristics of support staff and the impact of support staff on pupil outcomes and teacher workloads over a five-year period (2003-08). The study covered primary, secondary and special schools in England and Wales and involved large scale surveys (Strand 1), followed by a multi-method and multi-informant approach (Strand 2). The study featured: data on support staff characteristics, conditions of employment, training and experience obtained through three biennial national surveys; information on the deployment and practice of classroom based support staff provided by detailed systematic and structured observations and lesson transcripts; analysis of the effect of the amount of support on teachers, teaching and pupil attitudes to learning and academic progress; and an analysis of school and classroom processes connected to deployment and impact. The DISS project was funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG).

Key Findings

Support staff characteristics

- There was a significant increase in the number and FTE of support staff over the three waves, especially in the TA equivalent category, and teachers had experienced much more contact with support staff.

- The main reasons for change in support staff numbers given by schools was the number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils, new initiatives in school, change in overall school budget and implementation of PPA time.

- Most support staff were female, aged 36 and over, and almost all classified themselves as being of white ethnic background.

Conditions of employment

- Over two thirds of support staff worked extra hours. There was a significant decrease over the three waves in being paid for extra work.

- Support staff were generally positive about their level of job satisfaction, how much they felt appreciated by their school, their contracts and conditions of employment, working arrangements, and training and development they had received in their role. There was relatively less satisfaction with training and development opportunities available to them and still less with their pay.

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Preparedness

- The majority of support staff experienced training of some kind over the three waves, with TA equivalent, pupil welfare and administrative staff most likely to have attended.

- The majority of teachers had not had training to help them work with support staff in classrooms, even though the number of teachers involved in training support staff had increased at each wave.

- The majority of teachers did not have allocated planning, feedback or other allocated time with support staff they worked with in the classroom.

The deployment of support staff

- Classroom based support staff had a pedagogical role, supporting and interacting with pupils, and this exceeded time assisting the teacher or the school.

- TAs in primary schools tended to support children in small groups, while in secondary schools they supported individual students. The vast majority of support provided by TAs, both in and out of the classroom, was for low attaining pupils and those with SEN.

- At secondary level the more contact pupils had with support staff the less individual attention they had from teachers.

The practice of support staff

- TAs interactions with pupils, compared to teachers' interactions with pupils, tended to be more concerned with the completion of tasks rather than learning and understanding, and TAs tended to be reactive rather than proactive.

The impact of support staff

- Support staff had a positive effect on teachers' workload, level of job satisfaction and levels of stress.

- Teachers felt that support staff had a positive effect on the quality of teaching and observations showed a positive effect of classroom based support staff

on the overall amount of individual attention and on classroom control.

- Analysis of the extent to which the amount of extra support received by pupils over a school year improved their 'Positive Approaches to Learning' (PAL) showed little evidence of an effect at Wave 1 or at primary level for Wave 2, but there was a strong relationship at Year 9 at Wave 2. The more support received, the lower their distractibility and disruption and the better their relationships with peers, being independent and following instructions.

- At both Wave 1 and 2 there was a consistent negative relationship between the amount of support a pupil received and the progress they made in English and mathematics, and also at Wave 2 in science, even after controlling for pupil characteristics like prior attainment and SEN status. The more support pupils received, the less progress they made.

Introduction to the DISS Project

In the past few years there has been a huge growth in the range and number of support staff in schools. The main reasons for this include delegation of funding for special educational needs (SEN), accompanied by increased provision of teaching assistants (TAs) for pupils with statements of special educational needs; introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies; and the introduction in January 2003 of *'The National Agreement: Raising standards and tackling workload'* (NA), by the Government, local government employers and school workforce unions. The NA set out a number of measures designed to raise pupil standards, tackle teacher workload, and to create new support roles[1].

[1] Although the study was carried out during the period the National Agreement was introduced it was not within the study's remit to directly address the impact of these reforms, or to assess how far participating schools had completed NA contractual changes or remodelling changes; the focus was on the deployment and impact of support staff.

In 2003, research provided only limited information on the deployment and impact of support staff in schools[2], and the processes through which impact is maximised or inhibited. The five-year DISS study was designed to help fill these gaps by obtaining comprehensive and reliable data from England and Wales. The two main aims of the project were:

1. To provide an accurate, systematic and representative description of the types of support staff in schools; their characteristics and deployment in schools, and how these have changed over time

2. To analyse the impact or effect of support staff on teachers and teaching, pupil learning and behaviour, and on how impact is affected by school management and communications, and how this has changed over time.

Methodology

The DISS study is the first to systematically address the deployment and impact of all categories of support staff across all school sectors (primary, secondary and special). The study was not restricted to pupils with SEN or on School Action, etc, but covered all pupils who received support.

Strand 1 addressed the first main aim and involved three biennial questionnaire surveys - the Main School Questionnaire (MSQ), the Support Staff Questionnaire (SSQ), and the Teacher Questionnaire (TQ). Over the three 'waves' there were a total of around 20,000 completed questionnaires. The Wave 2 SSQ also collected 1,500 detailed timelogs completed by support staff to show the type and extent of their various activities over a school day.

Strand 2 used a multi-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, to obtain a detailed and integrated account of the deployment and impact of support staff. *Strand 2 Wave 1*

took place in 2005/06 and had three main components:

1. The first wave of the Main Pupil Support Survey (MPSS) involved a sample of 2,528 pupils across Years 1, 3, 7 and 10 in 76 schools and analysed effects of the amount of support across the school year (through teacher ratings and data from systematic observations) on pupils' academic progress over the year (based on National Curriculum levels and Key Stage test results) and 'Positive Approaches to Learning' (PAL), controlling for other factors likely to confound this relationship, (e.g., prior attainment, SEN status[3], gender, pupil family income, income deprivation, ethnic group, pupil age, and English as an additional language).

2. A systematic observation component resulted in 34,420 separate data points on the nature and contexts of TA-pupil interactions

3. Strand 1 case studies focussed on the school processes connected to the deployment of support staff and was based on observations and interviews with 500 staff and pupils in 47 schools.

Strand 2 Wave 2 took place in 2007/08 and had two components:

1. The second wave of the MPSS involved an increased sample of 5,672 pupils across Years 2, 6 and 9 in 77 schools.

2. Strand 2 case studies involved 95 interviews in 18 schools and focused on classroom based support staff. They also involved structured observations (1,502 observations) and transcripts of the interactions between teachers and pupils (5,226 utterances) and TAs and pupils (2,295) utterances in the same classrooms.

Results

In this report we summarise the results across the whole study thematically, highlighting changes over time.

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[2] Howes, A., Farrell, P., Kaplan, I. and Moss, S. (2003) *The impact of paid adult support on the participation and learning of pupils in mainstream schools*. London, IoE, Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI Centre)

[3] It is recognised that within the SEN category there are sub-types of SEN, but numbers were too small to treat them separately.

Support staff characteristics

One of the main contributions of the early stages of the DISS project was to develop a typology of all support staff in schools based, not on *a priori* notions of which post titles should go together, but on the basis of statistical analysis of similarities in the tasks that they performed. This analysis led to classification of support staff into seven categories (TA equivalent; pupil welfare; other pupil support; technicians; administrative staff; facilities staff; and site staff) and was the basis of all other analyses in the study. A reanalysis with data from Wave 3 indicated some changes but suggested that the classification was still similar to the original.

In recent years the rise in numbers of school support staff has accelerated considerably. Official DCSF figures for January 2008[4] estimate that nearly one in four people in the entire school workforce is a TA. In keeping with this picture, the DISS results showed large increases in numbers and FTE (full time equivalent) of all support staff. Increases were most marked for TA equivalent staff, and to a lesser extent the other six categories (pupil welfare, other pupil support, facilities, administrative, site staff and technicians). The main reason given by schools for the change in support staff numbers was the number of SEN pupils, followed by new school-led initiatives, change in overall school budget, and the introduction of PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time.

Having controlled for other variables including pupil numbers, special schools had the largest numbers of support staff on average and showed the largest perceived change in numbers. The vast majority of support staff were white females, aged 36 or over. Men and black and minority ethnic groups remained under-represented in the support staff population, particularly in classroom based roles.

At Wave 3, 35% of support staff had qualifications above GCSE level and 65% had qualifications at GCSE level or lower. Site and facilities staff and other pupil support staff had the lowest academic qualifications, whilst pupil welfare staff and technicians had the highest. There was a statistically significant tendency for support staff to be less qualified over time. At Wave 3, 60% of support staff reported that they did not need specific qualifications in order to be appointed to their post, and 45% were required to have previous experience.

Conditions of employment

The average number of hours worked per week was similar across the three Waves (22-23 hours). Almost one in five staff at Wave 3 worked full time and there were signs this figure decreased over the three Waves[5]. At all three waves, contracted hours were lower in primary schools than in secondary and special schools, and pupil welfare, technicians, administrative and site staff worked the longest hours. At Waves 2 and 3, a third of all support staff said that they would like to work more hours, with TA equivalent staff the most keen.

Most support staff were on permanent contracts (88%). The average wage at Wave 3 was £9.71 per hour (£8.80 per hour at Wave 1). At all three Waves, staff in primary schools received the lowest wages. There was a significant increase in salaries across the three Waves for all support staff groups, except other pupil support staff. The highest average salaries were paid at Wave 2 to pupil welfare and administrative staff, and at Wave 3 to technicians and administrative staff, whilst the lowest salaries at all three waves were paid to other pupil support staff, facilities and site staff. Several factors influenced support staff wages: characteristics of support staff, such as qualifications, gender and age; a 'disadvantage' effect, reflected in higher wages more likely with a higher percentage of SEN and pupils eligible for free school meals; an area effect (e.g., London); and school size.

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[4] DCSF (2008) *Statistical First Release (SFR 26/2008): School workforce in England (including local authority level figures), January 2008 (revised)*

[5] Full time was defined as 35 hours or more

Over two thirds of staff at Waves 2 and 3 worked extra hours. This was an increase on Wave 1, though necessary changes in the way the questions were asked means this change should be treated cautiously. In Waves 2 and 3 a distinction was made between extra work that was required and extra work undertaken voluntarily. Extra hours on a voluntary basis were three times as frequent as extra time required by a member of staff. At both Wave 2 and 3, TA equivalent, administrative and site staff were the most likely to work extra hours, whether required or voluntarily, whilst other pupil support and facilities staff were the least likely to work extra hours. The balance shifted more to working voluntarily (as opposed to being 'required' to work) in the case of TA equivalent, pupil welfare, technicians, and administrative staff. For the most part support staff worked on their usual tasks (90%), though over a quarter (26%) worked on tasks that were not a part of their usual jobs. There was a statistically significant decrease over the three waves in being paid for extra work. It was clear from the case study data that the 'goodwill' of support staff was vital to their deployment in schools.

There were differences between the three school sectors in terms of appraisal, supervision, and line management and performance review of support staff. Staff in secondary schools were less likely to be supervised and line managed by a teacher, more likely to be supervised by someone else, or alternatively not supervised by anyone. Strand 2 case studies suggested that support staff felt teachers and pupils did not always understand their roles, and this affected their sense of being of value to the school.

Support staff had a great deal of satisfaction from their work in schools. Over three quarters were satisfied with their contracts and conditions of employment, working arrangements, and training and development they had received in their role. There was relatively less satisfaction with training and development opportunities available to them (62%) and still less with their pay (44%), particularly amongst TAs and technicians.

Preparedness

'Preparedness' took two forms: first, training and professional development of support staff and teachers, e.g., to know how to direct and organise the work of support staff; and second, time for joint planning and feedback between support staff and teachers.

Attendance of support staff at training was most likely at school-based INSET (two thirds), while just half of support staff had attended non-school based INSET or other education and training relevant to their post in the last two years. TA equivalent and pupil welfare staff were the most likely to have attended training during this period. Overall satisfaction with training was high but staff in secondary schools were less satisfied with the training received and training opportunities available to them, compared to staff in primary and special schools.

At each wave of the Strand 1 surveys, about three quarters of teachers reported never having had any training or development to help them work with support staff, and this was despite the fact that teachers' involvement in the training or development of support staff had increased at each wave, from 40% at Wave 1 to 55% at Wave 3. At Wave 3 just under half of teachers were positive about the training they had received, and 75% of teachers who responded reported that such training lasted only one day or less. At Waves 2 and 3, only a third of the teachers who line managed support staff had received any training or development to help them with this role, and just over half at each wave said that it was useful. Of teachers who had not been involved in the training and development of support staff, 74% reported that they would have found it useful.

A constant finding of the DISS project has been the lack of meaningful time for joint planning and preparation before, and for feedback and reflection after, lessons. The majority of teachers did not have allocated planning or feedback time with the classroom based support staff they worked with. At Wave 3 of the Strand 1 surveys, for example, only a quarter of all teachers had any such time with TAs. Teachers in secondary schools were particularly unlikely (around 1 in 20) to have such time. Strand 1

survey and Strand 2 case study data showed that teacher-support staff communication was often ad hoc (e.g., before / after school; during break or lunch times) and this could affect support staff's potential for effective involvement with pupils. It was mainly due to the goodwill of support staff meeting in their own unpaid time that many teachers had an opportunity for planning and feedback. The DISS findings therefore point to a lack of preparedness for both support staff and teachers. The case studies revealed that the majority of comments concerning preparedness showed TAs and cover supervisors felt under prepared for their roles, picking up subject and pedagogical knowledge by 'tuning in' to the teachers' delivery. Cover supervisors described going into lessons 'blind'. Teachers were often detached from the planning and preparation of the intervention sessions that they delegated to TAs. TAs therefore often operated in a reactive rather than proactive way, responding to the immediate demands of the lesson and the pupil rather than building on prearranged instructional aims.

The deployment of support staff

There is much debate about the appropriate role of support staff in schools and how this differs from the role of teachers[6]. In line with this, there were issues arising out of the Strand 2 case studies concerning 'role clarity', 'role creep', and difficulties in distinguishing the role of classroom based support staff in relation to terms like 'supervision', 'support', 'monitoring' and 'teaching'. Here we draw on quantitative and qualitative data from the DISS project to describe the key features of what, in reality, support staff actually did in schools.

6 In the UK: Beeson, C., Kerry, C. & Kerry, T. (2003) *The Role of Classroom Assistants.* Birmingham, National Primary Trust. Farrell, P., Balshaw, M. & Polat, F. (1999) *The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistant*, London, Department of Education and Employment. Mistry, M., Burton, N. & Brundrett, M. (2004) Managing LSAs: an evaluation of the use of learning support assistants in an urban primary school, *School Leadership and Management*, 24(2), 125–137. Moran, A. & Abbott, L. (2002) Developing inclusive schools: The pivotal role of teaching assistants in promoting inclusion in special and mainstream schools in Northern Ireland, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17(2), 161–173. Schlapp, U., Davidson, J. & Wilson, V. (2003) An 'extra pair of hands'?: Managing classroom assistants in Scottish primary schools, *Educational Management and Administration*, 31(2), 189–205 .

Results showed there had been a huge increase in day-to-day contact between teachers and all types of support staff, which had accompanied the NA and the resulting increase in support staff numbers. Perhaps of greatest note was the substantial increase between Waves 1 and 3 in contact between teachers and staff who were not based in the classroom. Results from timelogs completed by support staff showed that across all categories of support staff, about twice as much time was spent supporting the school, either in terms of administrative or communicative activities, as was spent supporting the pupils in terms of direct learning support, direct pastoral support or indirect support. In contrast to the picture for support staff as a whole, TA equivalent staff spent by far the greatest amount of time of all categories of support staff on direct learning support for pupils. Such staff had a distinct pedagogical role, supporting and interacting with pupils, and this exceeded time assisting the teacher or the school. This finding was supported by results from systematic observation, Strand 2 case studies and headteachers' comments from the MSQ.

Structured and systematic observations showed that TAs in primary schools tended to support children in small groups, while TAs in secondary schools were more likely to support individual students. The vast majority of in-class support provided by TAs was for low ability / SEN pupils, with this being more common in secondary schools than in primary schools. Support for high and middle ability pupils was almost non-existent at both primary and secondary level.

Systematic moment-by-moment observations showed that pupils had very different types of contact with teachers and support staff. With teachers they were more likely to be one of a crowd, and this applied particularly to the non-SEN group. While with support staff pupils tended to be the main focus of attention and have more active and sustained interactions with them, and this applied particularly to those with higher levels of need.

Lower attaining pupils and those with SEN are likely to have hard to diagnose and complex difficulties but in many cases such pupils were routinely taught for much of

their time by TAs, not teachers. The systematic observation analysis showed that as pupils had more contact with support staff they had less interaction with teachers; in this sense support staff provided alternative, rather than additional, support.

More information on this finding can be found in Blatchford et al. (2009)[7].

TAs could effectively take over day-to-day responsibility for an individual or small group of pupils. Teachers did not therefore always have moment-by-moment responsibility for the curriculum and pedagogical planning for pupils supported by support staff.

The practice of support staff

Here we use the generic term 'practice' in a pragmatic way to cover the classroom interactions that take place, and concentrate on the interactions of TAs and teachers with pupils. Study of these interactions is important because models of effective teaching, as well as the common sense view, see the interactions between educator and pupil as at the heart of the pupil's educational experience and their learning. There were three sources of data.

First, some headteachers interviewed in the Strand 2 Wave 2 case studies were strongly of the view that support staff were essential to inclusion and differentiation. The case studies showed that interactions between TAs and pupils could be informal and personalised, aiding engagement, but they could also be reactive and unplanned on the part of the TA and encourage pupil dependency and separation from their teachers, the curriculum and their peers.

Second, analysis of systematic observation data showed that pupils' exchanges with teachers and support staff was very different. Pupils were more likely to passively 'attend' to teachers, whilst they engaged in far more active, sustained interaction with support staff.

[7] Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P. and Webster, R. (2009) The effect of support staff on pupil engagement and individual attention. *British Educational Research Journal*, iFirst Article, 1-26

Third, analysis of transcripts of TA-pupil and teacher-pupil dialogue suggested that TAs tended to be more concerned with the completion of tasks rather than learning and understanding, and they tended to be reactive rather than proactive (possibly because they had little time to prepare for, or input into, the lesson/session). TAs' interactions with pupils therefore differed from those between pupils and teachers; they could be less academically demanding.

The impact of support staff

The DISS study addressed the impact of support staff on teachers, teaching, and pupils.

Teachers

At Wave 1 of Strand 1 most routine and clerical tasks were still performed by the teachers, but by Wave 2 there was a major change with most tasks now performed by support staff. This continued through to Wave 3. Administrative staff were far more likely than any other support staff category to perform tasks previously undertaken by teachers. Just over half of teachers at each wave judged that support staff had led to a decrease in their workload. The reasons given for this positive effect were because the transfer of routine activities allowed more time for teaching and attending to pupils. In a minority of cases, workload had increased because of planning required to prepare support staff.

Support staff had a positive effect on teachers' level of job satisfaction. Two thirds of teachers at each wave of Strand 1 said that there had been an increase in satisfaction, and only 5%-7% said that support staff had decreased their job satisfaction. Support staff who worked more closely in the classroom seemed to have the most effect (TA equivalent and technicians). The main reasons given for the impact of support staff on teachers' job satisfaction were: more of the individual needs of their pupils being met; pupils' learning and achievement being enhanced; because of the personal qualities and skills of support staff; and because of increased time available for teaching and improvements in the quality of teaching.

There was also a positive view on the effect of support staff on teacher stress. Just under two thirds of teachers said that support staff had led to a decrease in their stress. Support staff with a more direct role in the classroom had most effect (TA equivalent and technicians). Teachers felt that a main reason for impact on stress levels was because of effects on teachers and their teaching (e.g., the teacher being able to share their workload or the pleasure of working as part of a team).

Teaching

The Strand 1 surveys showed that the main ways that teachers felt that support staff had affected teaching were through: bringing specialist help; allowing more teaching; affecting curriculum / tasks / activities offered; taking on specific pupils; removing administrative and routine tasks; and allowing more time for planning and preparation. The Strand 2 systematic observations and case studies also showed a positive effect of classroom based support staff on individual attention and on classroom control, both of which were a welcome contribution to schools, especially those working under challenging conditions.

Pupils

The Strand 1 surveys showed that the main ways that teachers felt that support staff had affected the learning and behaviour of pupils were through: supporting specific pupils; bringing specialist help to teacher and classroom (e.g., technology skills, counselling, or careers advice); having a positive impact on the pupils' behaviour, discipline or social skills; allowing individualisation / differentiation; improving pupils' attitudes and motivation to work; and having general positive effects on learning and behaviour.

Systematic analysis of the extent to which the amount of extra support received by pupils over a school year improved their 'Positive Approaches to Learning' (e.g., distractibility, motivation and disruptive behaviour) showed little evidence of an effect at Wave 1 or at primary level for Wave 2, but at Wave 2 there was a strong effect of the level of additional support on all eight of the PAL outcomes at Year 9

(secondary). The more support received, the lower their distractibility and disruption and the better their relationships with peers, being independent and following instructions. These results were clearly significant even after controlling for other pupil characteristics like prior attainment and SEN.

At both Wave 1 and 2 there was a consistent negative relationship between staff ratings of the amount of support a pupil received and the progress they made over the year in English and mathematics, and in addition at Wave 2 in science. The more support pupils received over the year, the less progress made. The study was longitudinal and not just cross-sectional, and the statistical analysis therefore examined relationships between the amount of support and pupils' educational *progress* (rather than just attainment at the end of year). A similar though less marked trend was found with measures of the amount of support taken from the systematic observation data.

The analyses indicated that these findings were not explainable in terms of the characteristics of the pupils themselves because the analysis also controlled as far as possible for other factors that might be expected to explain the relationship, such as SEN status, gender, pupil family income (indexed by eligibility for free school meals), income deprivation, ethnic group, pupil age, and English as an additional language. The analysis therefore examined the independent effect of additional support over and above these child characteristics. Further analyses showed that the negative relationship with support was not attributable to pupils who were making less progress being allocated more support over the year, and results were not attributable to any bias resulting from missing data.[8]

[8] The research was not able to test the possible relationships between individual characteristics of support staff, e.g., experience and qualifications, and pupil outcomes, but, as discussed in the Strand 2 Wave 2 Report (Blatchford et al., 2009), these seem unlikely to be a main factor in explaining the relationships between support and progress.

Conclusions

The large scale, five-year DISS project has produced results on all categories of support staff, in terms of their characteristics, conditions of employment, preparedness, deployment, and practice. Taken together these components provide the basis for what we call the 'Wider Pedagogical Role' (WPR) of (particularly classroom or pupil based) support staff[9]. The WPR model can help identify the possible factors and levels that need to be considered when seeking to account for effects of support on academic progress. It helps show that the effectiveness of support should not be personalised or individualised just to properties of individual pupils or TAs because this would seriously underplay the situational and structural factors within which TAs have to work and which will affect their impact. The practice of support staff therefore needs to be seen in the context of decisions made about their deployment by teachers and headteachers, which are largely outside their control, and also in the context of their preparedness and conditions of employment. In reality it is likely that individual characteristics and situational and structural factors will all be important and that there will be a complex interplay of relationships between the various components. It is not possible on the basis of the DISS data to exactly test these explanations and more research is needed on relationships between the WPR components and with pupil learning and behaviour.

The positive potential role of support staff

Though some of the results presented here have identified problems in current deployment and practice we would not want to give the impression that support staff do not have an important role to play. Classroom based support staff have huge potential in helping teachers and pupils, e.g., through their impact on teaching and learning, and this is certainly the view conveyed by practitioners. But the DISS study raises serious questions concerning the way they are currently deployed in schools, and this is one reason why supported pupils may not make as much progress as expected.

The DISS project findings have wide significance in the context of concern with the lack of progress made by some pupils in school. Given that lower attaining pupils are more likely to be given extra support it is vital that this is well organised and effective. More research is needed on the impact of support staff, but enough is known from the DISS project and other research (e.g., Vincett, Cremin and Thomas, 2005[10]) to provide the basis for advice on the deployment of support staff. A summary of recommendations from the DISS project are provided at the end of this report.

Setting the DISS results on impact in the context of other studies suggests one clear pattern. A recent systematic review by Alborz, Pearson, Farrell and Howes (2009)[11] shows that studies which have examined the effect of support staff when they are prepared and trained for specific curricular interventions (most studies have been in the area of literacy), with support and guidance from the teacher and school about practice, tend to show positive effects on pupil progress. In contrast, the DISS project examined the effect of the amount of support as it occurred under everyday conditions and there are concerns about their lack of preparedness, the way pupils can be separated from the teacher and the curriculum as a result of being supported by support staff, and the associations with academic progress. The DISS study is therefore assessing the effect of support staff under different conditions. The research on targeted interventions suggests that with appropriate training and guidance support staff can have a positive role to play in pupils' academic progress.

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[9] Webster, Russell, Blatchford, Bassett, Brown and Martin (in preparation). *The Wider Pedagogical Role of Support Staff*

[10] Vincett, K., Cremin, H. & Thomas, G. (2005) *Teachers and assistants working together*. Berkshire: OUP
[11] Alborz, A., Pearson, D., Farrell, P., Howes, A. (2009) '*The impact of adult support staff on pupils and mainstream schools'*, DCSF/London, IoE, Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI Centre)

Recommendations

Conditions of employment

- Though there are high levels of job satisfaction, there is a need for careful consideration, particularly of extra hours worked by support staff and conditions of employment, so that support staff are appropriately rewarded.

- More could be done to address the conditions of employment (e.g., supervision and line management) of support staff in secondary schools.

Preparedness

- More needs to be done to prepare newly-qualified and in-service teachers with the necessary skills and preparation to help them manage the growing number of support staff with whom they work.

- More needs to be done to prepare, particularly classroom based, support staff for their role in schools, especially for the now common, pedagogical, instructional role with pupils.

- More time should be available for joint planning and feedback, and recommendations should also be made concerning ways in which TAs can be deployed effectively.

The deployment of support staff

- Schools should examine the deployment of classroom or pupil based support staff to ensure that they do not routinely support lower attaining pupils and pupils with SEN.

- We suggest that pupils in most need should get more not less of a teacher's time.

- Teachers should take responsibility for the lesson-by-lesson curriculum and pedagogical planning for all pupils in the class, including those pupils being supported by support staff.

The practice of support staff

- More work on conceptualising the pedagogical role of TAs in their everyday interactions with pupils is required and needs to be built into professional development, school deployment decisions and the management, support and monitoring of support staff.

The impact of support staff

- Schools need to explicitly and rigorously set out the quality of provision and support in relation to anticipated academic outcomes.

- More research is needed which seeks to examine effects not just of the amount of support (as in DISS), but particular facets of the 'Wider Pedagogical Role' of support staff on pupil learning, behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Additional Information

The full report (DCSF-RR148) can be accessed at www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/

Further information about this research can be obtained from Sarah Baker, Schools Analysis and Research Division, 1F Area G, DCSF, Mowden Hall, Staindrop Road, Darlington DL3 9BG

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Publications from the DISS project

1) Strand 1 Wave 1

Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A., Webster, R., & Haywood, N. (2006) The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools. Report on the Findings from Strand 1, Wave 1. Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Research Report 776 *http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR776.pdf*

Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A., Webster, R., & Haywood, N. (2006) The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools. Findings from Strand 1, Wave 1. Research Brief 776 . Department for Education and Skills (DfES) *http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB776.pdf*

2) Strand 1 Wave 2

Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A., and Webster, R. (2007) The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools: Report on findings from the second national questionnaire survey of schools, support staff and teachers (Strand 1, Wave 2, 2006). Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Research Report 005 *http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR005.pdf*

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3) Strand 2 Wave 1

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See: www.supportstaffresearch.org.uk for more information on the DISS Project.